



***Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease  
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***Office of the Bureau Chief***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Nov. 19, 2001

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## ***Thanksgiving Food Safety Precautions Urged***

The Arizona Department of Health Services and the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department urge consumers to practice safe food preparation procedures to reduce the risk of foodborne illness this Thanksgiving holiday.

Meat and poultry, the centerpiece of most holiday meals, can be a source of foodborne disease unless handled and prepared properly. Hidden dangers of bacterial contamination in perishable foods often are forgotten. *Salmonella* and *C. jejuni* bacteria are commonly found on poultry and are among the most common sources of diarrheal disease in the U.S. To date this year, more than 940 cases of food-borne illness due to salmonella and campylobacter have been reported in Arizona, according to the ADHS. Federal statistics show that millions of people become ill from foodborne diseases, and as many as 5,000 die each year as a result of microorganisms in food.

Consumers should keep the following food safety guidelines in mind:

### **Food Handling and Preparation**

- ✓ Purchase only government-inspected meat and poultry products. Purchase dated packages only if the "sell by" date has not expired.
- ✓ Wash your hands thoroughly before and after preparing any food product.
- ✓ Never thaw meat or poultry at room temperature. When thawing a frozen turkey, either keep it refrigerated on a tray, under cold running water, or in the microwave. When thawing in a microwave, finish cooking in a conventional oven immediately.

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## **Thanksgiving Food Safety – Contd.**

- ✓ Keep two cutting boards handy -- one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting cooked food and preparing salads. After using utensils or cutting boards for raw food preparation or handling, thoroughly wash these items before using them for the preparation or handling of any other food.
- ✓ When preparing eggnog, hollandaise sauce, Caesar-salad dressing or other recipes that call for raw or undercooked eggs, use a pasteurized egg product instead of regular eggs.

## **Turkey Tips**

- ✓ Never cook a stuffed turkey or chicken in a microwave oven. Microwave cooking does not distribute heat evenly and can leave cold pockets inside the poultry.
- ✓ Use a cooking thermometer to determine if the turkey is fully cooked. The meat should reach 180 degrees Fahrenheit, and if the bird is stuffed, the stuffing must reach at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ✓ If a fully cooked turkey is purchased, it should be picked up hot and brought home for immediate consumption.

## **After the Feast**

- ✓ Do not allow any cooked food to sit out at room temperature for more than two hours. Leftovers should be refrigerated promptly after the meal. Freeze leftovers that won't be eaten within a few days. It's also a good idea to divide large amounts of leftovers into smaller portions for quick chilling. Leftover meat stored in the refrigerator should be eaten within three to four days.
- ✓ Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit throughout or until steaming hot. Soups, sauces and gravies should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute.
- ✓ Never taste leftover food that looks or smells strange. When in doubt, throw it out!

For more information about food safety, call the ADHS Office of Environmental Health at (602) 230-5911, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.